Development Centre is living upto its objectives;

(b) if so, what are its achievements till date;

(c) whether more such Centres will be opened; and

(d) the details of the capital and recurring expenditure on this Centre?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND SPACE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) and (b) The Rural Extension Centre of the Electronics Research and Development Centre (ER&DC), Thiruvananthapuram has started functioning in rural environment since may, 1995. The objective of the Centre is to provide opportunity for field testing of rural technology packages developed in ER&DC. It also envisages providing computer training to the rural youth and exposure to technology to the rural population. Training on Computer operation and familiarisation with the key board is being conducted for the rural youth. Computer based educational and training programmes for the schools in the rural areas are being developed currently with the participation of teachers of the middle schools in the rural areas.

(c) At present, there is no proposal of setting up more such Centres.

(d) There is no major capital or recurring expenditure of ER&DC. Thiruvnanthapuram involved in this Centre, at present.

Privatisation of Railway Services

*174. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether, with a view to improving efficiency and easing cash crunch, Government propose to take privatisation of new services, including franchising of freight terminals, confining itself to meeting only the primary demand of freight and passenger traffic;

(b) it so, what are the details of the related plans;and

(c) the steps taken and being taken to implement the same?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SURESH KALAMDI): (a) to (c) Yes, Sir. In view of the diminishing budgetary support to Railways, it has been decided to divert certain off-line activities to private sector, which would help foster competition, thereby increasing efficiency, and also ease the resource crunch. Areas identified for private participation include maintenance of telecom facilities, catering services and hotels, maintenance of stations and cloak rooms, franchising of freight terminals, running of tourist trains on identified circuits. The 'Own Your Wagon' Scheme and the 'Build-Own-Lease-Transfer' scheme have already elicited a good response.

Electronic Fish Finder Developed by ER&DC

*175 SHRI SURINDER KUMAR SINGLA: DR. SHRIKANT RAMCHANDRA JICHKAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Electronics Research and Development Centre has developed

electronic fish finder for the benefit of fishermen;

(b) if so, what are the salient features of this fish finder and on what principle it works;

(c) what is its cost and whether it is affordable by the fishermen; and

(d) whether they have found it useful and how many of the fish finders have been sold up till now?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENTS OF ATOMIC ENERGY AND SPACE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI BHUVNESH CHATURVEDI): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The equipment, fish finding echo sounder is used for locating fishes upto a depth of 100 meters. It uses and Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) as a viewing device and operates on a 12 volt battery available in a fishing vessel.

Fish finder works on the principle of ultrasonic echo sounding.

(c) The cost of equipment is estimated to be around Rs. 30,000/-and is considered affordable by fishermen for use on both small and medium size trawlers.

(d) Field trials have been done and fish shoals were located in sea at different depths. Since the equipment has not gone into regular production yet, no field data is available.

MRTS Project in Delhi

*176 SHRI SATYA PRAKASH MALAVIYA: DR. BAPU KALDATE:

Will the Minister of URBAN AFFAIRS & EMPLOYMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether financial institutions have refused to finance MRTS projects in Delhi;

(b) the steps proposed to be taken to meet this expenditure; and

(c) by when the project is proposed to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE DEPARTMENT OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE MINISTRY OF URBAN AFFAIRS AND EMPLOYMENT (SHRI R. K. DHAWAN): (a) No, Sir. Only a meeting had been held with the financial institutions to discuss different modes of financing the capital costs of the Delhi MRTS Project in view of the heavy requirement of long-term funds and the provisions needed for debt servicing obligation. The observations made by the Financial Institutions at this meeting have been noted.

(b) The different possible modes of financing the project include budgetary support, dedicated levies, loans and bileteral assistance from OECF (Japan) etc.

(c) The first Phase of the Project presently identified for implementation would be completed in about 10 years from the date of commencement of work.

Railway line between Dhanushkodi and Rameswaram

*177. SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) what is the distance between Dhanushkodi and Rameswaram;

(b) what will be the approximate cost of the railway line to be constructed between Rameswaram and Dhanushkodi;

(c) whether Government would take up this project in the near future to attract more tourists there; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SURESH KALMADI): (a) Approx. 19 Kms.